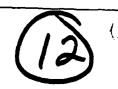


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Unionization Activity as a Function of	
Employee Job Attitudes, Management Practices	
and Social-Economic Factors	
University of Gregon	
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Pamela S. Shingledecker
University of Houston

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correlated with union activity. Variables in the social-legal-economic environment showed inconsistent relationships with unionization. The best predictors of unionization activity were degree of unionization in the state,

supervision, store size and satisfaction with job security.

DD 1 JAN 73 1473 EDITION OF 1 NOV 65 15 OBSOLETE 5/N 0107-014-6601 ! Unionization Activity as a Function of Employee Job Attitudes, Management Practices and Social-Economic Factors

A considerable amount of empirical research exists on the nature and causes of union growth. Economic cycles, Federal and State regulations, and social movements have been found to reliably predict unionization activity (cf. Kochan, 1980). Research data are accumulating that also suggest that individual attitudes toward working conditions, pay and job security predict individual voting behavior in union representational elections (cf. Brett, 1980a; 1980b). But, in his review of this macro and micro literature, Kochan (1980) notes that very little empirical research currently exists where the organization was the unit of analysis. We find this omission serious because the decision to elect union representation is an outcome that occurs at the level of the organization or at the level of a subunit in the organization. Consequently, an important contribution to the literature would be made if research were conducted that focused on predictors of unionization activity where this activity was measured at the level of the bargaining unit in the organization.

The purpose of the present study was to investigate unionization activity using archival employee survey data collected from 177 retail stores belonging to the same national merchandise organization. Aggregate employee ratings of satisfaction with job content and job context and descriptions of management practices within the store were examined as possible precursors of within store unionization activity. In addition, data also were collected on several environmental factors that past research suggest are related to union growth. Development of Hypotheses

Research on union representation elections indicates that the decision to unionize or to engage in unionization activity seems to be related to

employee affective reactions to the job context. Getman, Goldberg and Herman (1976), in a study of 31 union representational elections in the midwest, found that satisfaction with working conditions correlated $\underline{r} = -.53$ with actual vote. People were more likely to vote for collective bargaining when they were dissatisfied with the "bread and butter" issues of pay, job security and fringe benefits. Similar results were reported by Schriesheim (1978). Employee reactions to job security, company policy, pay and working conditions correlated $\underline{r} = -.74$ with actual vote in a union representational election.

Whereas satisfaction with job context factors seems to predict voting behavior in representational elections, satisfaction with job content factors has been only weakly related to desire for collective bargaining. Getman et al. (1976) and Schriesheim (1978) found that satisfaction with the work itself was not a reliable predictor. One explanation for this finding is that union leaders focus on job context issues both during a unionization campaign and during contract negotiations (Kochan, Lipsky & Dyer, 1974; Getman et al., 1976). A second explanation is that unions are less able to bargain for quality of work life and job enrichment concerns. How do you include achievement satisfaction in a labor contract?

Job content factors, however, should not be dismissed as unimportant for prediction unionization activity. Getman et al. (1976) suggest that perhaps greater understanding would be obtained if job content and job context were considered simultaneously. That is, employees satisfied with their work content but dissatisfied with the work context might be most predisposed to the suggestion of unionization. These people like the work they do but dislike working conditions, pay, fringe benefits and other "bread and butter" issues. Employees dissatisfied with both context and content might be alienated or not sufficiently motivated to seek work

improvement. Employees who are satisfied with context factors but dissatisfied with content factors should not view unionization as instrumental toward improvement in the job content and should not be strongly predisposed toward collective bargaining. Finally, employees satisfied with both job content and job context should be least inclined to support unionization activities. This literature leads to our first two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Aggregate measures of employee satisfaction with job context factors will
be negatively correlated with the degree
and extent of "nionization activity within that bargaining unit.

Hypothesis 2: Organizations whose employees are dissatisfied with the job context but satisfied with
the job content will be most likely to
engage in unionization activity

A second factor mentioned by Brett (1980) and Kochan (1980) that might function as a precusor to collective bargaining is the degree of formal and informal influence that is available to employees for correcting negative and biased actions by management. Related to this would be perceptions of inconsistent and unfair practices by supervisors and the existance of unsupportive organization climates. Hamner and Smith (1978) found that out of 42 job satisfaction items, the best single predictor of collective bargaining activity dealt with supervision. Likert and Likert (1976) also state that organization and management practices that suppress employee participation can lead to increased conflict between labor and management. Based on this empirical and theoretical work, we propose our third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Organizations whose employees describe internal management practices in negative

terms will be more likely to engage in unionization activity than organizations whose employees describe internal management practices in positive terms.

Research also exists that relates various employee and organization descriptive characteristics to interest in collective bargaining. Brett (1980) and Ginsburg (1970) suggest that the size of the organization might be an important predictor to the extent that increasing size creates increasing problems of communication and coordination between management and labor. Estey (1971) and Kochan (1980) also argue that unions are less likely to attempt organization efforts in small organizations because of the poor return on costs of organizing. It should be noted, however, that in bargaining units with fewer than 10 employees, there is a tendency for unionization to be successful (Rose, 1972). But, the general finding relating size to unionization represents our fourth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Size of the organization will be positively correlated with the degree of unionization activity.

It also appears that employee demographic characteristics predict union growth, although the relationships are weak. Specifically, Getman et al (1976) found that workers who were young, had low tenure and belonged to a minority were most likely to vote for collective bargaining. Kochan (1980) also reports that in white collar occupations, women have more favorable dispositions than men toward unionization. Finally, some evidence exists that unionization is not widely sought by part-time workers. Research on retail clerks indicates that part-time employees are a difficult group to organize (Estey, 1971). Also, full-time employees may turn to unionization as a means to protect job security. Our fifth hypothesis will summarize there relationships.

Hypothesis 5: Unionization activities will be most
likely found in organizations that have
high representation by non-white, low
tenured, female employees who work full-time.

Finally, Kochan (1980) has summarized research on the relationship between social-political-economic factors and union growth. First, unionization is most likely to occur when the social and political environment is supportive of collective bargaining. One method for indexing this environmental predictor is to examine the percentage of unionized employees in the state. Second, there is evidence that union membership is directly related with changes in the business cycle. During periods of economic expansion union growth also turns upward (Ashenfelter & Pencavel, 1969). This leads to our final hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6: Unionization activities will be most likely
to occur in organizations that are in states
that have a history of heavy unionization, and
in organizations that are in communities experiencing
economic growth.

METHOD

Sample

Archival data were collected for 177 retail stores that belong to the same national organization. All stores were located in Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas. In 21 of these stores, some level of unionization activity with all full-time sales and sales support personnel as the bargaining unit took place during the period from 1973 to 1977. No unionization activity of any form occurred in the remaining 156 stores during this same period. The employees in these stores performed sales and sales support functions. Part-time employees and management were not

involved in the unionization activities. Store size as measured by the number of full-time and part-time employees ranged from 24 to 251 employees with an average size of 132 employees.

Assessment of variables

Unionization activity was measured in a way identical to that used by Hamner and Smith (1978). The following code was used:

- 0 = no union activity from 1973 to 1976 (N = 156)
- 1 = handbilling of unit (N = 9)
- 2 = card signing (N = 1)
- 3 = union meetings to plan and initiate a serious organization attempt (N = 6)
- 4 = union representation petition filed by the union <math>(N = 1)
- 5 = union election held and won by the company <math>(N = 4)
- 6 = union election held and won by the union (N = 0)

This scale represents a monotonic progression in degree and extent of union-ization activities that occurred at the level of the bargaining unit within the store. Recall that for this particular investigation the bargaining unit was defined as all full-time retail sales and sales support personnel who were not a part of management.

Measures of employee job attitudes were taken from a larger organizational survey carried out among all members of the employees in these 177 stores. Participation was voluntary although release time from work was provided to maximize response rate. All surveys were anonymous. The actual response rate to such surveys in this organization traditionally exceeded 90%. Specifically, four scales from the Index of Organization Reactions (Dunham, Blackburn & Smith, 1977) were used measure satisfaction with pay (= .80), working conditions (= .88), job security (= .82), and kind of work (= .84) In addition, six items highly similar to the JDI work scale (Smith, Kendall & Hulin, 1969)

were used to provide a second measure of satisfaction with work content. This scale displayed internal consistency similar to that of the other validated measures (.73) although the criterion related validity is essentially unknown. For each employee, the total scale score was computed and this was then divided by the number of items in the scale. The store average was then computed for each of the 177 stores for each of the five measures of job satisfaction.

Descriptions of management practices were also taken from the company attitude survey. These items did not ask for affective reactions but pertained to descriptions of group interaction process, supervisory practices, and organization practices. These three scales were composed of five, nine and 20 items respectively, had high internal consistency reliabilities (alpha ranged from .70 to .89) and in a different study, these scales were found to correlate with store profit, sales and annual turnover rate (Komocar, 1980). As with the job satisfaction measures, for each employee a total scale score was computed, this then was divided by the number of items in the scale, and a store mean for each scale was determined.

Employee and store demographic variables were taken from the attitude surveys and from store personnel statistics. Data were available for store size (total number of full-time and part-time employees), percentage of employees in the bargaining unit who were male, percentage of employees in the bargaining unit who were not classified as a racial minority, mean tenure of the employees, and percentage of part-time employees.

Variables thought to index the social-political-legal environments in which the 177 stores were located were taken from several sources. Percentage of unionized employees in the state was recorded for 1974 (U.S. Department of Labor, 1977). State population was recorded for 1975 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977). For each of the SMSA's represented by the 177 stores, it was

possible to collect per capita income in 1974, change in per capita income from 1969 to 1974, and unemployment rate for 1970 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1977). Unfortunately, unemployment rates beyond 1970 were available for only selected areas. Therefore, we were forced to use 1970 data if we wanted to examine the relationship between economic cycle and unionization activity.

RESULTS

Means and standard deviations for all predictors as a function of level of unionization activity can be found in Table 1. Inspection of the

Insert Table 1 about here

mean scores across level of unionization activity shows that the general pattern was linear. Consequently, it was thought appropriate to compute correlations between level of unionization activity and each of the predictors. We also examined the magnitude of scale standard deviations. In the Hamner and Smith study (1978) the standard deviations were larger for stores that had unionization activity. The table indicates that in the present study, the standard deviations were highly similar.

Correlations among the variables are presented in Table 2. Hypotheses

Insert Table 2 about here

1, 3, 4, 5 and 6 can be examined through inspection of Table 2. There was no support for the first hypothesis. Aggregate measures of satisfaction with working conditions, pay and job security were not correlated with unionization activity. Although the correlations were in the predicted direction, they were of such limited size so as to be of little value.

In contrast to the first hypothesis, there was moderate support for the third hypothesis. All three measures of organization characteristics were significantly correlated with unionization activity. The more negatively employees described group process, supervisory practices and organizational practices the greater the observed level of unionization activity. The correlations, however were small even though statistically significant. The fourth hypothesis also was supported. Store size correlated $\underline{\mathbf{r}} = .19$ (p<.01) with unionization activity. Of interest, size was more highly related to aggregate measures of job satisfaction than to descriptions of management practices. Recall that one of the proposed reasons for the connection between size and unionization activity was that size should reduce employee influence and increase problems of communication and coordination. This aspect of the hypothesis was not verified.

Hypotheses five and six received mixed support. The results indicate that contrary to predictions, unionization activity was positively correlated with percentage of white employees and level of tenure. Employee sex was unrelated to level of unionization activity. Finally, the greater percentage of part-time employees in the store, the more likely it was to find unionization activity occurring among full-time employees. Consistent with hypothesis six. level of unionization in the state in which the store was located was positively correlated with extent of unionization in the store. With a correlation of growth were negatively related with unionization activity. Unemployment rates for 1970 were positively related to collective bargaining behaviors at the store level for 1973 to 1977. Also, the smaller the change in per capita income from 1969 to 1974, the greater the unionization activity at the store level. This latter correlation only approached usual levels of statistical

significance.

Hypothesis 2 dealt with unionization activity as a joint function of employee satisfaction with the job context and the job content. Results for this hypothesis are presented in Table 3. Stores were divided into

Insert Table 3 about here

four groups as a function of whether the mean level of satisfaction with the job content (satisfaction with kind of work and satisfaction with the work itself) was above or below the median and as a function of whether the mean level of satisfaction with the job context (satisfaction with pay, job security and working conditions) was above or below the median. The overall chi square was significant ($X^2 = 46.18$, p<.01) but the data do not support the hypothesis. This significant result was primarily a function of an interaction between content and context ($X^2 = 44.79$, p<.01). The majority of stores were either high on both factors or low on both factors. Unionization activity was most frequently observed in stores either above the median on both aspects of job satisfaction or below the median on both aspects of job satisfaction.

In order to further examine relationships among the variables, it was decided to compute several regression equations using unionization activity as the criterion. Predictor variables were divided into three sets. The first set consisted of attitudinal/descriptive responses. These were the three organization description scales and the five job satisfaction scales. The second set was store/employee demographic characteristics and consisted of store size, percentage of part-time employees, percentage of white employees, percentage of male employees and average store employee tenure. The third set consisted of the five environmental variables of

percentage of unionization in the state, per capita income, change in per capita income, unemployment rate and state population.

Hierarchical regression, varying the order of the three variable sets, indicates the relative independence between the three types of variables.

As shown in Table 4, regardless of order of entry into the equation, each set accounted for approximately the same amount of variance in union activity.

Insert Table 4 about here

Attitudinal variables predicted approximately 7% of the variance, demographic variables predicted approximately 7% - 9% of the variance and environmental variables predicted approximately 9% - 11% of the variance. The total equation was significant ($\mathbb{R}^2 = .25$, p < .05).

All individual variables also were placed into a step-wise prediction model. The criterion for inclusion was that the significance value of the change in \mathbb{R}^2 be p \blacktriangleleft .10. The results for this analysis are presented in Table 5.

Insert Table 5 about here

Using this procedure, 10 variables accounting for 25% of the variance were included in the equation ($R^2 = .25$, p < .01). It would seem that these results support the findings reported in Table 4. The first three predictors came from environmental variables, attitudinal variables and demographic variables. No single variable set dominated the regression results. Using the Lord-Nicholson shrinkage formula, the estimate of the squared cross validity of this equation was .16.

DISCUSSION

The present study cleary demonstrates that multivariate models of union

activity and growth are required in order to develop a complete understanding of the factors behind employees seeking collective bargaining. Although we should not abandon psychological models or labor economic models, this study begins to suggest the complexities involved in research on union growth and union activity. It no longer is sufficient to compute bivariate correlations between measures of job satisfaction and measures of union directed behaviors in the absence of other factors.

A second conclusion that can be drawn from these results is the relative independence among the variable sets. Within the limitations of the measures used, external factors, aggregate store demographic characteristics and aggregate employee attitudes and descriptions made independent contributions to prediction of degree and extent of unionization activity. More research is needed that attempts to uncover relationships among these different sets. For example, in the present study per capita income and change in per capita income were correlated with several of the measures of job satisfaction.

Consistent support was round for the notion that internal management practices within an organization would impact on the desires and behaviors of organization members with regard to unionization. This aspect of labor relations has not been widely investigated in the past. Future work would seem justified. Perceptions of unfair and inconsistent treatment coupled with an inability to bring about change may be more important precursors of unionization than employee affective reactions to the job content or context.

In a departure from previous findings, there was little support for the hypothesized relationship between job satisfaction and unionization activity. There are several explanations for this that should be more closely examined. First, the present study collected satisfaction data up to 18 months prior to the occurrance of unionization activity. That is, a period of 18 months

following administration of the attitude survey was inspected for evidence of unionization action. Past research, on the other hand, has used a much more compressed time frame. During a union representational election, the union and the company may make job characteristics salient. Thus, when job satisfaction measures are taken within weeks of the election, there is a strong relationship. Second, most of the studies relating satisfaction to union directed behavior have been at the individual level of analysis. Hamner and Smith (1978) are an exception. It is possible that artifacts produced through aggregation mask individual satisfaction --- behavior relationships. And third, the criterion used in the present study was different from that used by Getman et al (1976) and Schriesheim (1978). Individual level research has focused on behavioral intentions and reports of vote outcome in an election. In contrast, the criterion used in the present study was primarily a measure of union activity prior to an election. It is possible that internal managerial practices prodict initial unionization activity whereas job satisfaction predicts the outcome of an election.

The present results once again demonstrate that social-political factors in the environment are useful for predicting union activity. States with high proportions of unionized employees were most likely to have stores in this organization that engaged in unionization activity. This is not inconsistent with the "Saturation" hypothesis, however (Moore & Newman, 1975).

Retail sales people, which were the participants in the present study, are not highly organized. Thus, we might suggest that unions will be most likely to approach employee groups in their own states that are not themselves highly organized rather than spread out resources to other states to organize traditional union occupations.

Of interest, the results relating economic growth with union activity were opposite of predictions. The measures used in the present study indicate

that union activity is greatest in communities that have high unemployment and small increases in income. One explanation for these contradictory findings could be in problems with our measures of economic growth. But, a more interesting proposal is that past research has focused on aggregate measures of union growth whereas the present study focused on unionization activities. Unionization activities are necessary for union growth but they do not necessarily lead to union growth. Recall that there was no union growth in the sample of stores used in this research. Thus, it is possible that during economic stagnation, employees a e interested in the protection a union could provide but are unwilling or unable to actually call an election. Also, union resources could be limited such that mounting a costly campaign During economic growth, however, expectations are raised, is difficult. the union might have additional resources and employees might be more willing to risk a union. We suggest then that unionization activity such as hand billing a unit or collecting authorization signatures would occur during periods of growth or stagnation, but that actual growth in union membership occurs during periods of growth. If we assume that local economic conditions impact on employee expectations and consequently employee levels of satisfaction, then unionization activity should be greatest in units that have either satisfied employees or dissatisfied employees. The former want more in an expanding market and the latter want to prevent loss in a contracting market. Some support for this hypothesis can be found in Table 3. Unionization activity was most frequently observed in stores where employees were generally satisfied or dissatisfied.

In conclusion, it would appear that multivariate models of unionization activity and union growth will be required in future research. Joint models that incorporate goals of employees with goals of local and national unions in the context of the climate of the organization and the local economy must

developed and empirically tested.

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FOOTNOTE

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations

		Union	No Union					
Variables	Total	(1-5)	0	1	2	3	4	5
		(N=156)	(N=21)	(N-9)	(N=1)	(N=6)	(N=1)	(N=4)
Kind of Work	X 3.93 SD .15	3.92 .13	3.93 .15	3.96 .16	4.05	3.87 .09	3.70	3.94 .08
Job Description	3.17 .11	3.14 .12	3.17 .11	3.17 .13	3.12	3.11 .11	2.94	3.18
Work Conditions	3.64 .23	3.62 .18	3.65 .24	3.62 .15	3.41	3.60 .18	3.26	3.76
Pay	3.27 .19	3.24 .21	3.27 .18	3.25 .22	3.23	3.25 .28	2.97	3.27 .08
Job Security	3.49 .16	3.47 .15	3.50 .16	3.50 .16	3.57	3.44 .15	3.23	3.51
Organizational Practices	3.25 .14	3.20 .12	3.25 .14	3.23 .09	3.34	3.19 .16	2.94 -	3.17 .04
Supervisory Leadership	3.16 .18	3.07 .17	3.18 .17	3.05 .15	3.31	3.12 .10	2.72 -	3.08 .21
Group Process	3.29 .12	3.25 .14	3.30 .12	3.28 .10	3.51	3.21 .12	2.88	3.26 .08
Store Size	295 142	350 234	287 124	306 136	109 -	400 267	410	42 0 40 0
% Part-time	40.0 10.8	45.4 10.5	39.3 10.7	41.4 12.2	44.0	47.3 10.3	55.0	49.2 7.9
% Male	51.6 7.9	52.0 8.1	51.6 7.9	54.6 4.7	66.0 -	45.7 7.1	59 .0	50.2 10.4
% White	87.4 14.3	92.2 14.2	86.7 14.2	88.3 21.3	99.0	95.2 4.7	89.0	95.5 3.0
Tenure	2.92 .46	2.88 .31	2.92 .48	2.90 .20	3.11	2.87 .54	2.94	2.79 .17
Population	1741 2269	1700 2392	1747 2260	1206 1564	_ 8 6 _	2810 3724	2322	1393 2047
Union in State	23.9 9.0	31.0 7.5	23.0 8.8	27.4 8.2	28.7	33.9 6.7	37.5	33.9 6.0
nemployment	4.3 1.2	4.7 1.2	4.2 1.2	4.5 1.5	5.7	4.5	4.3	5.2 1.2
Per Capita Income (PCI)	4733 686	4674 638	4741 581	4529 871	4165	4936 388	4677	4734 378
change in PCI	7.8 1.0	7.5 .7	7.8 1.1	7.8 .5	8.2	7.2 .8	7.9	7.3 1.0

(r 2.17, p <.01; r 2.12, p <.05; r 2.10, p <.10)

Table 2

MATRIX
INTERCORRELATION MATH

Variables	-	64	ရ	4	တ	9	7	&	6	입	=	12	13	7	13	118	17	18
ATTITUDINAL																		
1. Organizational Practices																		
2. Supervisory Leadership	.53																	
3. Group Process	.74	.46																
4. Kind of Work	.45	.30	.63															
5. Job Description	.58	.23	. 80	69.														
6. Work Conditions	.63	. 23	.61	.42	.42													
7. Pay	.47	.23	.51	.50	12.	.32												
8. Job Security	.65	.43	. 55	.38	. 58	.41	.62											
DEMOGRAPHIC																		
9. Store Size	08	.10	17	16	40	.04	29 -	24										
10. S Part-time	13	02	23	19	27	10	24 -	22	.34									
11. % Male	60	11	14	17	13	13 -	21 -	- 80	03	.31								
12. S White	60	06	03	15	05	12	01 -	05 -	04	.27	.32							
13. Tenure	11	.05	04	.21	. 12	41	.11	12	.03	.12	.21	. 26						
ENV I HONNENTAL																		
14. Population	60	14	10	101335		18	4034	. 34	.36	.2004		03	.07					
15. % Union in State	26	04	30	20	28	26 -	33	34	.21	. 52	.20	.19	.23	.32				
16. Unemployment	60	08	12	.01	.03	23	.03	07 -	04	.13	.01	8.	.20	.07	.18			
17. Per Capita Income (PCI)	22		23	27	46	19	43 -	35	.30	.28	07 -	01-	08	54	.31	20		
18. Change in PCI	21	.03	. 26	.27	.37	.25	.43	.38	19 -	31	13 -	04	08	54 -	54	14	30	
19 ITHIOM ACTIVITY	7	117	17	1	- 10 - 02		2	5	9		104	14	26	S		•	6	1

Table 3

Frequency Distribution of Stores by Union,
Job Content and Job Context

Satisfaction	Union	Activity	No Union	Activity
	N	<u>%</u>	N	<u>%</u> _
High/High	6	29%	60	38%
High/Low	4	19%	18	12%
Low/High	2	9%	20	13%
Low/Low	9	43%	58	37%

N = 177 $X^{2}_{total} = 46.18,p < .01$ $X^{2}_{High/Low} = .95, NS$

Table 4

Regression Prediction of Union Activity from Variable Sets

Variables in	8	Variables in	6	Variables in	8
Step 1	R Change	Step 2	R Change	Step 3	R Change
Attitudes	.07	Demographics	**60.	Environment	**60.
Attitudes	.07	Environment	.11**	Demographics	*40.
Demographics	**60.	Environment	**60.	Attitudes	.07
Demographics	**60.	Attitudes	.07	Environment	**60.
Environment	.11**	Attitudes	.07	Demographics	*40.
Environment	.11**	Demographics	*40.	Attitudes	.07

N = 177 R = .504, $R^2 = .254$, F = 2.96, p < .05*p < .05 **p < .01

Variables	Multiple R	R ²	R ² Change
Percent of Union Members in State	.30	.09	.09
Supervisory Leadershi	p .34	.12	. 02
Store Size	.37	.14	.02
Job Security	.41	.17	.02
Unemployment rate	.43	.18	.01
Percent of Male Employees	. 44	.20	.01
Percent of White Employees	.46	.21	.or
Tenure	.47	. 22	.01
Kind of Work	.48	.23	.01
Group Process	.50	. 25	.01

N = 177F(10,164) = 5.36, p<.01

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